



Better than Nothing? A scoping review on tiny homes and sleeping cabins as a response to homelessness in high-income countries

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ABSTRACT

Tiny homes and sleeping cabins are often touted as a quick and efficient solution to providing shelter or housing for unhoused individuals. No known knowledge syntheses have amalgamated this body of literature, and this is needed to inform future research, practice and policy. To address this gap, we conducted a scoping review using the framework advanced by Arksey and O'Malley. We searched seven databases supplemented by a search of grey literature. We included studies that were empirical, non-empirical, of any design, and both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed literature. This search yielded 116 unique articles following the removal of duplicates. Over half of the included articles were empirical ($n = 65$; 56 %) and less than half were peer-reviewed ($n = 43$; 37.1 %). The majority of articles represented literature pertaining to the United States ($n = 89$; 76.7) and Canada ($n = 14$; 12.1 %). We generated four themes in our narrative synthesis: 1) Tiny homes and sleeping cabins as a viable component of a broader solution to homelessness; 2) How to make it happen; 3) Critical perspectives on the use of tiny homes and sleeping cabins as a response to homelessness; and 4) It's better than nothing. We conclude that a range of articles on this topic have been published, yet this literature remains under-developed with few empirical studies providing evidence for the effectiveness of tiny homes and sleeping cabins over other interventions. More empirical research is needed to warrant the use of tiny homes and sleeping cabins as a response to homelessness in light of literature on alternative approaches.

Introduction

Though a range of efforts to prevent and end homelessness have been deployed, this serious social problem continues to grow internationally. Globally, an estimated 150 million individuals experience homelessness every year, with 2 million forcefully evicted from their homes and 1.8 billion people living in inadequate housing conditions (UN Habitat 2025). In high-income countries where there are adequate resources to resolve homelessness, its presence represents a serious human rights violation that appears to be the consequence of a lack of political will to address this social problem (Eisenmann and Origanti, 2019). Although housing and healthcare are frequently in the purview of federal and regional levels of government in many countries, housing and

homelessness services are typically designed and delivered at the municipal level. With limited resources, municipalities frequently feel abandoned by higher levels of government in managing the problem of homelessness, for which broader structural solutions beyond municipalities are needed (Donaldson et al., 2025). In the interim, municipalities and persons who experience homelessness continue to find ways to manage this seemingly intractable problem in their communities, often feeling under-resourced and overwhelmed by the human suffering they observe daily.

The observable growth of homelessness in most communities, coupled with the lack of resources provided to address this problem, has motivated many individual citizens and community groups to find ways of supporting individuals living in shelters and encampments in

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whatever ways are possible within their means. Often, this involves gathering resources to support the survival of their unhoused neighbours including crocheting plastic mats for people who are unhoused (Bhargava, 2021), collecting and distributing socks, underwear, hats and mittens to unhoused persons (Hampshire, 2023), and distributing food to residents in encampments (Ricci, 2018; Greenblatt, 2018). Such efforts have not only enabled unhoused persons to access resources for survival but have also provided individual community members and advocacy groups with opportunities to enact agency in contributing to solutions in the face of a problem that regional and federal governments have failed to adequately address. One such approach emerging in popularity in recent years is the use of tiny homes and sleeping cabin (THSC) communities as an alternative to traditional shelters and encampments. Advocates of THSCs, an approach that has been rapidly growing in popularity across North America, argue that they can provide viable permanent or temporary shelter for unhoused persons in the absence of available and safe shelter beds, deeply affordable housing, and effective upstream policy approaches for preventing and ending homelessness (Mitchell, 2023; Petz, 2024; Ferry et al., 2022).

What are “tiny homes” and “sleeping cabins?”

A range of terms are used to describe THSCs in literature and popular discourse including “tiny homes”, “tiny shelters,” “tiny cabins,” “micro-housing”, “micro-homes,” “sleeping cabins,” and “sleeping shelters,” among others. Housing that is 29m² or smaller, self-contained, and inclusive of a bedroom area, small kitchen and private bathroom are typically referred to as “tiny homes” or “micro-housing” (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2024). This form of housing is often regarded as a possible solution to providing permanent and high-quality housing in the context of a housing affordability crisis for any individual in the general population. Tiny homes are further touted as a sustainable solution designed to reduce overall consumption, thereby heralding minimalism as a virtue and a solution to mitigating the environmental impacts of a capitalist society (Bingham and Howells, 2025). Housing as small as 7.5m² and including a bed and a lockable door, but lacking a self-contained private bathroom or kitchen facilities are often referred to as “tiny cabins,” “sleeping cabins” and “sleeping shelters” (Barker, 2021). Beyond size and constitution, “sleeping cabins” differ from “tiny homes” in that sleeping cabins are typically meant to provide temporary, transitional shelter for an individual who is unhoused while they await permanent or other forms of transitional housing (Chandler, 2023). Unlike the perceived minimality, sustainability, and permanence of tiny homes, sleeping cabins are often seen as a short-term alternative to shelters for persons experiencing homelessness. In the midst of this range of terminology, that at times is conflated in the literature, the topic of THSCs can be confusing. As such, for clarity, and for the purposes of this paper, we have adopted the term “tiny home” to refer to permanent housing with amenities including running water, kitchen facilities, and a private bathroom, and “sleeping cabin” as a temporary shelter solution meant for persons experiencing homelessness that lacks these amenities in a self-contained unit.

What is the evidence for THSCs as a response to homelessness?

In recent years, there have been increased calls in some communities to leverage THSCs to fill a gap in existing housing and shelter systems. These calls have been primarily represented in mainstream media articles describing the specific use of sleeping cabins (SCs) as transitional housing (Mitchell, 2023), the use of tiny homes (THs) as transitional housing for veterans who are leaving homelessness (Konkert, 2023), and the value of tiny home and sleeping cabin (THSC) communities for facilitating belonging among persons who experience homelessness (Green, 2023). Increasingly, municipalities are collaborating with organizations and community advocates by providing funding to establish and maintain THSC communities. These THSC communities are seen as

an alternative to traditional shelter beds with millions of dollars dedicated to initiatives across North America (Westoll, 2023; Khalid, 2021; Bueckhert, 2023; City of Portland 2025). Critics argue that there is limited evidence to support the re-allocation of existing public funding away from shelters and permanent housing solutions to fund precarious THSC communities (Chandler, 2023), and that THSCs cost more to establish and operate than emergency shelters and motel room programs (Greene et al., 2025). Little is known about the scope of literature on the topic of THSCs as a response to homelessness, and there are no known knowledge syntheses that have amalgamated existing literature on this topic. Synthesizing this body of literature is essential for informing future research, practice, and policy efforts in this area.

The current study

Anecdotal evidence indicates that THSC communities are growing across North America, and little is known about the state of existing literature on this topic. There is a need to understand the scope and range of existing literature to inform future research efforts, to provide information for practitioners working with individuals who experience homelessness, and to policymakers, who are tasked with making decisions regarding allocating public funding for housing and homelessness services. To understand the range and breadth of this body of literature, we sought to address the research question: What is the range and scope of literature on THSCs as a response to homelessness in high-income countries internationally?

Methodology

We conducted a scoping review using the process described by Arksey and O’Malley (Arksey and O’Malley, 2005), following PRISMA ScR guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018). Scoping reviews are an evidence synthesis strategy aimed at summarizing existing literature to inform research, policy, and practice (Munn et al., 2018). Arksey and O’Malley’s (Arksey and O’Malley, 2005) framework includes five distinct phases: 1) identifying the research question; 2) identifying relevant studies; 3) selecting appropriate studies; 4) charting the data; and 5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results. Each of these processes are described below. Our protocol was prospectively registered with Open Science Framework (Marshall et al., 2022).

Search strategy

The search strategy was developed in collaboration with an academic research librarian, an author on this study (RI). Our search combined the concepts of homeless (e.g. Ill-housed person*; Homeless persons; Homeless*; Unhoused) and THSC (e.g. Tiny home*; Sleeping cabin*; Micro-home*) using a Boolean “AND”. We searched a total of seven research databases (ASSIA; CINAHL; Embase; Medline; Proquest Dissertations and Theses; Social Services Abstracts; Social Work Abstracts). We also conducted an extensive search of other key databases and grey literature (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare; CMHC Library; European Journal of Homelessness; Google; Google Scholar; Homeless Hub; Homelessness Australia; Institute of Global Homelessness Hub; International Journal of Homelessness). After considering each platform’s command language, controlled vocabulary, and appropriate search fields, the search strategy was translated for each database. A sample of our search, deployed in Medline, is provided in Appendix 1. Further, the reference lists of all included studies were screened to identify any additional articles not captured using our search strategy (Tricco et al., 2018). Our search was originally deployed in November 2022 and updated in July 2024.

Study selection

We uploaded our searches from each database into CovidenceTM, a

cloud-based software program that assists with collaborative review and data extraction (Munn et al., 2018). Our team acted as two independent raters to screen titles and abstracts and conduct a full-text review by comparing each included article against pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria. These criteria are provided in Table 1. Conflicts arising during either of these stages were resolved by consensus. When a conflict could not be resolved using two raters, a third rater was asked to resolve the conflict.

Data extraction

We used a custom data extraction form developed in Covidence (VeritasHealthInnovation 2016) which we used to extract the following information from all included articles: author(s); year of publication; study design; peer review status (peer-reviewed/non-peer-reviewed); community type (urban/rural); participant characteristics; tiny home/-sleeping cabin type; and country in which participants were sampled, or the study pertained.

Narrative synthesis

We uploaded all included articles to Dedoose (SocioCultural Research Consultants L. Dedoose 2018), a cloud-based qualitative data management program, to facilitate the analysis of included papers. Several team members coded relevant statements pertaining to the use of THSCs as a response to homelessness in all included studies. To do this, we read each article in full, and coded statements inductively using descriptive codes in an attempt to retain the original meanings intended by the authors of included studies. Each code was then organized into categories. These categories were arranged into themes which were refined through extensive discussion and consensus across several team meetings. This process occurred between April 2023 and March 2025.

Findings

We identified 116 unique articles after the removal of duplicates published between 1965–2024 (Alexander, 2017; Alexander, 2019; Alexander, 2022; Antczak, 2023; Arredondo, 2023; Australian Centre for Social Innovation 2019; Awad, 2022; Babayan et al., 2021; Bartholomew et al., 2019; Beveridge, 2023; Bezgirebelna et al., 2023; Bohn, 2023; Bordelon and O'Hagan, 2019; Bowers, 2024; Bozorg and Miller, 2014; Brallier and Southworth, 2024; Brisson et al., 2024; Brokenshire, 2019; Brokenshire, 2018; Brotman, 2020; Calhoun et al., 2022; Cassel-man, 2024; Chaland, 2021; Albert CoP 2024; Cumberbatch-Pearson 2020; Stortz, 2022; Day, 2019; Day, 2019; Deniro, 2023; Donnelly, 2018; Douglas, 2023; Earl, 2023; Escalante and Wong, 2020; Evans,

2020; Evans, 2022; Evans, 2023; Evans, 2024; Esch, 2023; Falstad and Cloutier, 2020; Fivecoat-Campbell, 2016; Ford and Gomez-Lanier, 2017; Furst, 2017; Gabel and Schmitz, 2022; García, 2024; Giamarino, 2023; Gilmour, 2023; Gochnour 2023; Gold et al., 2021; Food and Shelter, 2019; Gulliver-Garcia, 2016; Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters 2022; Henderson, 2019; Herzog, 2019; Hitzke, 2021; Watch, 2024; Hunte, 2024; Huntington, 2016; Jackson et al., 2020; James and Shahab, 2024; Jervis, 2024; Johnson, 2019; Johnston, 2022; Leavitt, 2019; Leickly et al., 2022; Leickly et al., 2024; Lindeback, 2024; Longworth, 2019; Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023; Luoni, 2019; Lynch et al., 2023; Malott 2021; Margier, 2021; Margier, 2023; Marshall et al., 2022; Martinez, 2018; McGuffin, 2021; Mendelson, 2021; Viewpoint, 2021; Mingoya, 2015; Mogk et al., 2020; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.; Noguchi, 2023; Strategies O. 2024; Orr et al., 2023; Pable, 2023; Pamuk and Umarov, 2022; Phillips and Hamilton, 1996; Pickerill et al., 2023; Pope, 2018; Przybylinski, 2023; Reidy, 2023; Raise the Roof 2016; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021; Rumboldt, 2022; Scally et al., 2020; Schuler, 2023; Scoccimaro, 2021; Seeley, 2020; Shearer and Burton, 2023; Siahaan, 2023; Silver, 2023; Stevens and Dhungel, 2024; Tanner, 1965; Trambley, 2021; Trauth, 2021; Urban, 2016; Viso, 2022; Waters, 2022; Wasserman et al., 2023; Wilson, 2021; Wilson et al., 2022; Win, 2023; Winkler et al., 2022; Wood, 2023; Wong et al., 2020; Martinez, 2018) (See Fig. 1 for a summary of our article selection process). Of the included articles, $n = 43$ (37.1 %) were peer reviewed, $n = 40$ (34.5 %) were not peer reviewed, and $n = 33$ (28.4 %) were dissertations or theses. Almost half ($n = 51$; 44.0 %) were non-empirical and included primarily opinion papers, organizational reports and practice guides. Those that were empirical ($n = 65$; 56.0 %) were mostly qualitative ($n = 43$; 37.1 %). Only two of the included quantitative studies were experimental (Escalante and Wong, 2020; Win, 2023), and both evaluated the seismic performance of THSCs. None evaluated the effectiveness of THSC on health or social outcomes beyond observational studies (Escalante and Wong, 2020; Win, 2023). Non-empirical studies were primarily narrative reviews or opinion papers ($n = 23$; 19.8 %) and organizational reports ($n = 15$; 12.9 %).

A total of $n = 89$ (76.7 %) included studies were conducted in or pertained to THSCs in the United States, $n = 14$ (12.1 %) in Canada, $n = 4$ (3.4 %) in Australia, $n = 1$ (0.8 %) each in North America and the United Kingdom, and $n = 7$ (6.0 %) were international in focus. In terms of the type of shelter referred to in included articles, $n = 49$ (42.2 %) pertained to THs (i.e. small homes with integrated amenities), $n = 29$ (25.0 %) pertained to SCs (i.e. no integrated amenities), and $n = 33$ (28.4 %) pertained to both THs and SCs in the same article. The type of shelter was not specified in $n = 5$ (4.3 %) articles. See Table 2 for a complete summary of the characteristics of the included articles, and Table 3 for a list of the characteristics of all included articles.

Table 1
Inclusion Criteria.

1) articles pertained to all ages
2) articles published in all years
3) empirical or non-empirical articles
4) any study design
5) dissertations or theses
6) book chapters
7) articles published in any language
8) articles pertaining to the use of tiny homes or sleeping cabins in countries classified as high-income according to criteria established by the World Bank (World Bank 2025)
Exclusion Criteria
1) conference abstracts
2) papers describing student projects (i.e. capstone projects)
3) book reviews
4) entire books
5) articles published on websites or mainstream media
6) articles pertaining to the use of tiny homes or sleeping cabins in countries classified as middle- or low-income according to criteria established by the World Bank (World Bank 2025)

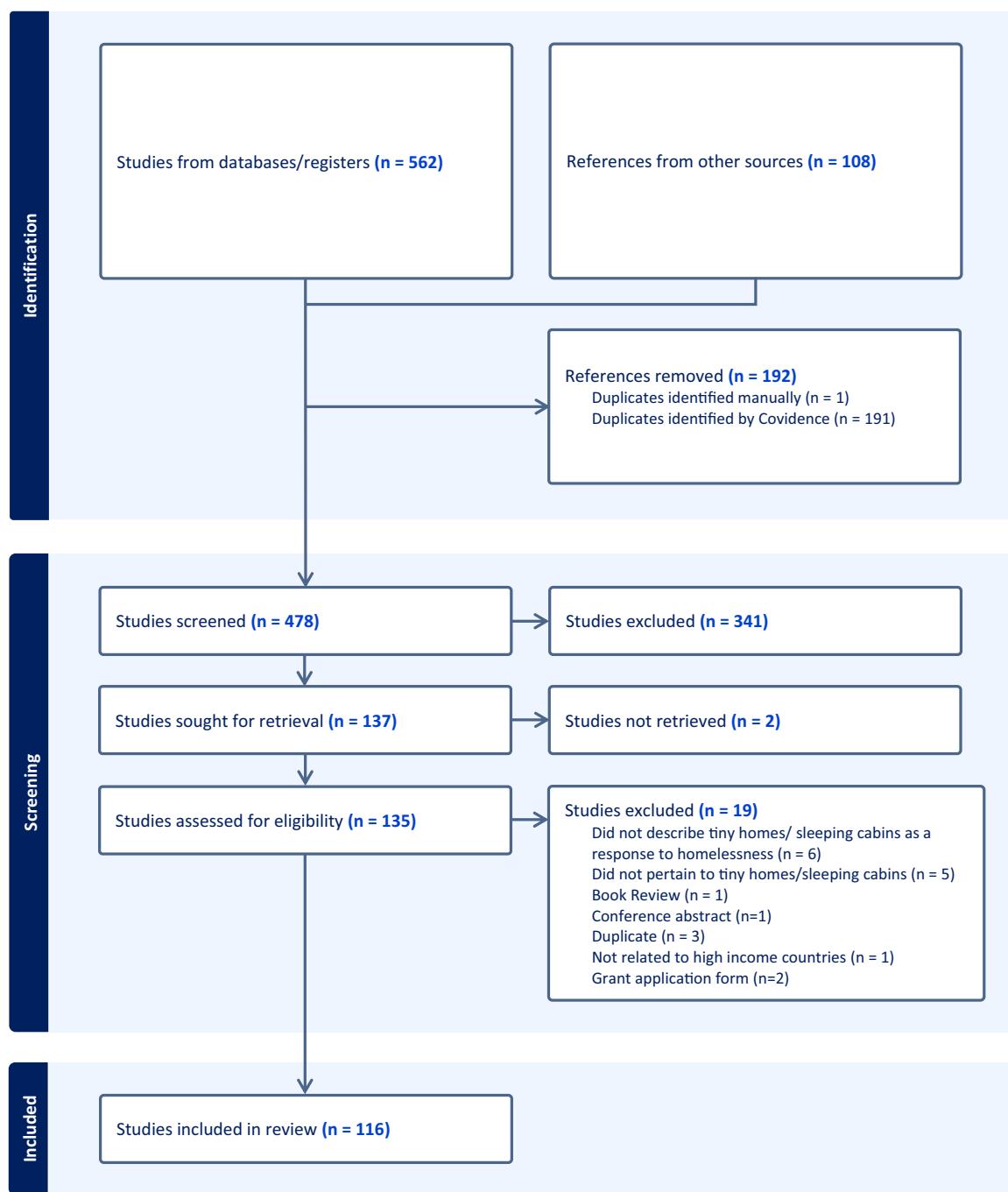


Fig. 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram.

Narrative synthesis

We generated four themes in our narrative synthesis: 1) THSCs as a viable component of a broader solution to homelessness; 2) How to make it happen; 3) Critical perspectives on the use of THSCs as a response to homelessness; and 4) It's better than nothing. Each of these themes and associated sub-themes are discussed in the following narrative synthesis.

Theme 1: THSCs as a viable component of a broader solution to homelessness

In $n = 94$ (81.0 %) articles included in this review, the authors described how THSCs were not a panacea for homelessness yet discussed the value of this approach as one part of a broader strategy for

responding to homelessness (Alexander, 2017; Alexander, 2019; Alexander, 2022; Antczak, 2023; Arredondo, 2023; Australian Centre for Social Innovation 2019; Awad, 2022; Babayan et al., 2021; Bartholomew et al., 2019; Bordelon and O'Hagan, 2019; Bowers, 2024; Bozorg and Miller, 2014; Brisson et al., 2024; Brokenshire, 2019; Brokenshire, 2018; Brotman, 2020; Calhoun et al., 2022; Casselman, 2024; Albert CoP 2024; Cumberbatch-Pearson 2020; Day, 2019; Day, 2019; Deniro, 2023; Earl, 2023; Evans, 2020; Evans, 2022; Evans, 2023; Esch, 2023; Falstad and Cloutier, 2020; Fivecoat-Campbell, 2016; Ford and Gomez-Lanier, 2017; Furst, 2017; Gabel and Schmitz, 2022; Giamarino, 2023; Gilmour, 2023; Gold et al., 2021; Food and Shelter, 2019; Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters 2022; Henderson, 2019; Hitzke, 2021; Watch, 2024; Hunte, 2024; Huntington, 2016; Jackson et al., 2020; James and Shahab, 2024; Jervis, 2024; Johnson, 2019; Johnston, 2022;

Table 2
Summary of Included Articles ($n = 116$).

Characteristic	n (%)
<u>Study Design</u>	
Non-empirical articles	51 (44.0)
Narrative reviews/opinion papers	23 (19.8)
Organizational report	15 (12.9)
Book chapter	9 (7.8)
Thesis proposal	2 (1.7)
Practice guide	1 (0.9)
Proposal	1 (0.9)
Empirical studies	65 (56.0)
Qualitative	43 (37.1)
Case study	20 (17.2)
General qualitative	14 (12.1)
Ethnography	5 (4.3)
Arts-based	3 (2.6)
Narrative	1 (0.9)
Phenomenology	1 (0.9)
Participatory co-design	1 (0.9)
Quantitative	11 (9.5)
Cross-sectional	7 (6.0)
Experimental	2 (1.7)
Longitudinal	2 (1.7)
Mixed methods	11 (9.5)
Sequential explanatory	4 (3.4)
Case study	3 (2.6)
Participatory research with co-design	1 (0.9)
Concurrent	2 (1.7)
Ethnography	1 (0.9)
<u>Peer review status</u>	
Peer reviewed	43 (37.1)
Non-peer reviewed	40 (34.5)
Dissertation/thesis	33 (28.4)
<u>Community type</u>	
Urban	93 (80.2)
Rural	4 (3.4)
Mixed urban/rural	9 (7.8)
Not specified	10 (8.6)
<u>Country to which articles pertained</u>	
United States	89 (76.7)
Canada	14 (12.1)
Australia	4 (3.4)
North America	1 (0.9)
United Kingdom	1 (0.9)
International	7 (6.0)
<u>Type of tiny home/sleeping cabin on which authors focused</u>	
Tiny home (small home with integrated amenities)	49 (42.2)
Sleeping cabin (cabin without integrated amenities)	29 (25.0)
Mixed (both tiny homes and sleeping cabins)	33 (28.4)
Not specified	5 (4.3)

Note: Percentage sums do not all equal 100 due to rounding.

Leickly et al., 2022; Leickly et al., 2024; Lindeback, 2024; Longworth, 2019; Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023; Luoni, 2019; Margier, 2021; Margier, 2023; Marshall et al., 2022; McGuffin, 2021; Mendelson, 2021; Viewpoint, 2021; Mingoya, 2015; Mogk et al., 2020; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.; Noguchi, 2023; Orr et al., 2023; Pable, 2023; Phillips and Hamilton, 1996; Pickerill et al., 2023; Pope, 2018; Przybylinski, 2023; Reidy, 2023; Raise the Roof 2016; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021; Scally et al., 2020; Schuler, 2023; Scoccimaro, 2021; Seeley, 2020; Shearer and Burton, 2023; Siahaan, 2023; Silver, 2023; Stevens and Dhungel, 2024; Tanner, 1965; Trambley, 2021; Trauth, 2021; Urban, 2016; Viso, 2022; Waters, 2022; Wilson, 2021; Wilson et al., 2022; Win, 2023; Winkler et al., 2022; Wood, 2023; Wong et al., 2020; Clowdus, 2023). Authors discussed concerns about the increasing challenges of providing affordable housing to individuals living in poverty in the context of a housing market that is increasingly unaffordable (Alexander, 2022; Scoccimaro, 2021). Introducing THSCs was positioned as a low-cost and rapid approach that could overcome affordability challenges in the rental market and enable communities to more adequately address homelessness (Johnson, 2019; Longworth, 2019; Trambley, 2021). Most authors advocated for the use of THSCs as

a transitional solution that would enable persons experiencing homelessness to survive in the context of a lack of shelter beds and permanent housing solutions (Antczak, 2023; Giamarino, 2023; Watch, 2024; Noguchi, 2023). Having the stability of consistent shelter was seen as a way of providing a foundation for leaving homelessness by helping unhoused persons to prepare to transition successfully to permanent housing by acquiring vocational skills and managing sobriety (Food and Shelter, 2019; Huntington, 2016). Some authors highlighted that THSCs could be used as an alternative to shelters for people who would not otherwise choose to use shelters (Day, 2019; Mogk et al., 2020). Still others identified that the affordability of market housing was so low with no projected end in sight that THSC communities are needed now and in the future as a permanent housing solution for persons at risk of homelessness (Gold et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2020). For this reason, authors recommended that THSC communities be funded by municipalities to ensure their successful implementation as part of a broader array of needed shelter options (Mingoya, 2015).

Sub-Theme: the “Value add” of THSCs

The “value add” of THSCs in relation to the array of existing services was in $n = 69$ (59.5 %) of the articles included in this review (Alexander, 2019; Alexander, 2022; Antczak, 2023; Arredondo, 2023; Awad, 2022; Bordelon and O'Hagan, 2019; Bowers, 2024; Brallier and Southworth, 2024; Brisson et al., 2024; Brokenshire, 2019; Calhoun et al., 2022; Casselman, 2024; Cumberbatch-Pearson 2020; Stortz, 2022; Day, 2019; Deniro, 2023; Earl, 2023; Escalante and Wong, 2020; Evans, 2020; Evans, 2024; Esch, 2023; Falstad and Cloutier, 2020; Furst, 2017; Gilmour, 2023; Gochnour 2023; Gold et al., 2021; Food and Shelter, 2019; Gulliver-Garcia, 2016; Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters 2022; Herzog, 2019; Watch, 2024; Huntington, 2016; Jackson et al., 2020; James and Shahab, 2024; Johnson, 2019; Johnston, 2022; Leickly et al., 2022; Leickly et al., 2024; Lindeback, 2024; Longworth, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; McGuffin, 2021; Mendelson, 2021; Mingoya, 2015; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.; Noguchi, 2023; Pable, 2023; Pamuk and Umarov, 2022; Phillips and Hamilton, 1996; Pickerill et al., 2023; Pope, 2018; Przybylinski, 2023; Raise the Roof 2016; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021; Scally et al., 2020; Schuler, 2023; Scoccimaro, 2021; Shearer and Burton, 2023; Siahaan, 2023; Stevens and Dhungel, 2024; Trauth, 2021; Urban, 2016; Waters, 2022; Wilson, 2021; Wilson et al., 2022; Win, 2023; Wood, 2023; Wong et al., 2020; Clowdus, 2023). Authors indicated that a primary benefit of THSCs is that while they can vary in cost, they can provide a more affordable alternative than building permanent housing (Escalante and Wong, 2020; Evans, 2020; Pamuk and Umarov, 2022; Pope, 2018; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021; Wilson, 2021). Further THSCs were described as using less space, consuming a smaller ecological footprint, and can be made quickly and efficiently, thereby responding to the crisis of homelessness sooner than permanent housing (Scoccimaro, 2021) while restoring dignity and control to the lives of persons experiencing homelessness (Brisson et al., 2024; Earl, 2023; Evans, 2023; Lindeback, 2024).

Living in tiny homes or sleeping cabins was described as providing residents with increased opportunities for supporting their recovery journey by providing increased access to meaningful activities that could enhance well-being (Marshall et al., 2022; Noguchi, 2023; Siahaan, 2023; Clowdus, 2023). Co-locating community gardens within THSC communities was described in one article as a strategy that could not only provide opportunities for meaningful activity, but could also help address food insecurity for residents (Food and Shelter, 2019). In another article, the authors advocated for the use of THSC as places where skills for employment could be taught, thereby increasing the employability of residents (Falstad and Cloutier, 2020). Authors of other articles argued that a sense of community spirit that is often present in THSC communities, is often missing in shelters or other supportive housing contexts (Siahaan, 2023).

Table 3Description of included articles ($n = 116$).

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/ Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Alexander (2017) (Alexander, 2017)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Alexander (2019) (Alexander, 2019)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Alexander (2022) (Alexander, 2022)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Antczak (2023) (Antczak, 2023)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny home)	Canada
Arredondo (2023) (Arredondo, 2023)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Australian Centre for Social Innovation (2019) (Australian Centre for Social Innovation 2019)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 93	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	Australia
Awad (2023) (Awad, 2022)	Qualitative (case study)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n=42	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Babayan, Futrell, Stover & Hagopian (2021) (Babayan et al., 2021)	Quantitative (cross-sectional)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 67	Age: Mixed youth and adults ($m = 45$; $sd=11.2$; range 24–67) Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: White ($n = 36$; 56.3 %); Black ($n = 4$; 6.3 %); Latino ($n = 5$; 7.8 %); American Indian/Alaska Native ($n = 6$; 9.4 %); Asian or Pacific Islander ($n = 1$; 1.6 %); Mixed race ($n = 12$; 18.8 %) Sexual orientation: Heterosexual ($n = 51$; 81.0 %); Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other ($n = 12$; 19.1 %) Clinical characteristics: Chronic health condition (asthma, heart disease, stomach or digestive	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States

(continued on next page)

Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/ Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Bartholomew (2019) (Bartholomew et al., 2019)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Not specified	n/a	disorder, diabetes, high blood pressure, HIV/AIDS) (n = 40; 64.5 %); Cancer (n = 3; 4.8 %); Chronic pain (arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia, tooth pain) (n = 40; 64.5 %); Sensory (any deafness or blindness) (n = 20; 32.3 %); Difficulty with movement or physical disability (n = 28; 45.2 %); Past or current family violence (n = 26; 41.9 %); Mental health condition (major or clinical depression, anxiety disorder, PTSD, bipolar or manic-depressive disorder, schizophrenia) (n = 52; 83.9 %); Substance dependence (n = 20; 32.3 %)	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Beveridge (2023) (Beveridge, 2023)	Quantitative (cross-sectional)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No Participants (United States focus)
Bezgrehbelna, Hajat, Njenga, Settembrino, Vickery & Kidd (2023) (Bezgrehbelna et al., 2023)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Not specified	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (International in scope)
Bohn (2023) (Bohn, 2023)	Quantitative (longitudinal)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 106	Age: Not specified Gender: n = 63 men; n = 41 women Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: n = 90 White; n = 9 Hispanic; n = 7, Indigenous; n = 3 Black; n = 1 Asian Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Bordelon & O'Hagan (2019) (Bordelon and O'Hagan, 2019)	Qualitative (participatory co-design)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Bowers (2024) (Bowers, 2024)	Qualitative (case study)	Non-peer reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	North America
Bozorg & Miller (2014) (Bozorg and Miller, 2014)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Brallier & Southworth (2024) (Brallier and Southworth, 2024)	Qualitative (general)	Peer reviewed	Urban	n = 44	Age: Not specified Gender: n = 28 men; n = 16 women Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Brisson, Hoops Calhoun & Wilson (2024) (Brisson et al., 2024)	Book chapter	Non-peer reviewed	Urban	n = 24	Age: Intervention group ($m = 39$); Control group ($m = 48$) Gender: Intervention group (48 % men; 43 % women; 9 % trans or other gender); Control group (40 % men; 52 % women; 8 % trans or other gender) Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Intervention group (75 % White; 13 % Black; 4 % Latino/Hispanic; 8 % other); Control group (40 % White; 20 % Black; 20 % Latino/Hispanic; 4 % Indigenous; 16 % other) Sexual orientation: Intervention group (68 % heterosexual; 32 % 2SLGBTQIA+); Control group (80 % heterosexual; 12 % 2SLGBTQIA+) Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Brokenshire (2019) (Brokenshire, 2019)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (Australia focus)
Brokenshire (2018) (Brokenshire, 2018)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (Australian focus)
Brotman (2021) (Brotman, 2020)	Quantitative (cross-sectional)	Peer reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Calhoun, Wilson, Chassman & Sasser (2022) (Calhoun et al., 2022)	Mixed methods (sequential explanatory)	Peer-reviewed	Not specified	n = 32	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Asian or Pacific Islander ($n = 2$, 6.3 %); Black or African American, not Latino ($n = 5$, 15.6 %); Latino or Hispanic ($n = 5$, 15.6 %); Native American or American Indian ($n = 3$, 9.4 %); White, not Latino ($n = 29$, 90.6 %) Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Casselman (2024) (Casselman, 2024)	Mixed methods (case study)	Not peer-reviewed	Mixed urban/ rural	n = 41	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Chaland (2021) (Chaland, 2021)	Organizational Report	Not peer-reviewed	Mixed urban/rural	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (Canada focus)
City of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, (2024) (Albert CoP 2024)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Rural	Individual interviews ($n = 41$) Focus groups ($n = 22$) Community wide	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	Canada

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Clowdus (2023) (Clowdus, 2023)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Mixed urban/rural	Qualitative interviews (number of participants Not specified) meeting (n = 39) Total (n = 102)	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Cumberbatch-Pearson (2021) (Cumberbatch-Pearson 2020)	Qualitative (general)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 10	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
D'Amato Stortz (2022) (Stortz, 2022)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 36	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	Canada
Day (2019a) (Day, 2019)	Qualitative (narrative)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Day (2019b) (Day, 2019)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
DeNiro (2023) (DeNiro, 2023)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Donnelly (2018) (Donnelly, 2018)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Douglas (2023) (Douglas, 2023)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Earl (2023) (Earl, 2023)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Escalante & Wong (2020) (Escalante and Wong, 2020)	Quantitative (experimental design)	Not peer-reviewed	Not specified	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No human participants (United States focus)
Evans (2020) (Evans, 2020)	Quantitative (cross-sectional)	Peer-reviewed	Not specified	n/a	Age: Not specified Family composition: Mixed Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Evans (2022) (Evans, 2022)	Quantitative (cross-sectional)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 154	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Caucasian (89 %) Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Evans (2023) (Evans, 2023)	Book chapter	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (United States focus)
Evans (2024) (Evans, 2024)	Qualitative (case study)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 6	Age: Not specified Family composition: Mixed Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Esch (2023) (Esch, 2023)	Book chapter	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Falstad & Cloutier (2020) (Falstad and Cloutier, 2020)	Mixed methods (participatory research with co-design)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 3 (Group interview PLEH); n = 4 (Survey participants PLEH-pre/post); n = 5 (Service provider interviews)	Age: Adults (range=30–70) Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: “the group is predominately African American” p22 Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: “Each of the resident members of The Building Community has experienced long-term homelessness and is living with multiple challenges, such as substance abuse/addictions, conviction histories, limited formal education, low fixed incomes, chronic illnesses and physical disabilities, among other conditions” p22	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Fivecoat-Campbell (2016) (Fivecoat-Campbell, 2016)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Not peer-reviewed	Not specified	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Ford & Gomez-Lanier (2017) (Ford and Gomez-Lanier, 2017)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Not specified	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (international focus)
Furst (2017) (Furst, 2017)	Qualitative (general)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 11	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Gabel & Schmitz (2022) (Gabel and Schmitz, 2022)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Not specified	n/a	specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	n/a Not specified	No participants (United States focus)
Garcia (2024) (García, 2024)	Qualitative (case study)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 20	Age: 65+ Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: n = 17 (85 %) White; n = 2 (10 %) Latino; n = 1 (5 %) Asian Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (i.e. wheeled tiny homes, tiny homes, sleeping cabins)	United States
Giamarino (2023) (Giamarino, 2023)	Qualitative (arts-based)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 36	Age: m = 46 (30-68) Gender: n = 23 (64 %) male; n = 12 (33 %) female Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: n = 10 (34 %) mixed race; n = 7 (24 %) Black/African American; n = 5 (17 %) Caucasian; n = 4 (14 %) Hispanic/Latinx; n = 2 (7 %) Indigenous; n = 1 (3 %) Pacific Islander. Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Gilmour (2023) (Gilmour, 2023)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	No participants (Japan/Canada focus)

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Gochnour (2022) (Gochnour 2023)	Book Chapter	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	<i>Tiny home</i> (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Gold, Salerno, Scally & Oliver (2021) (Gold et al., 2021)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 10	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	<i>Tiny home</i> (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Greene (2019) (Food and Shelter, 2019)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Not peer-reviewed	Not specified	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (United States focus)
Gulliver-Garcia (2016) (Gulliver-Garcia, 2016)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Mixed urban/rural	n/a	n/a	<i>Tiny home</i> (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (Canada focus)
Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (2022) (Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters 2022)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	No participants (Canada focus)
Henderson (2019) (Henderson, 2019)	Quantitative (cross-sectional)	Dissertation/thesis	Rural	n = 48	Age: Not specified Family composition: Mixed compositions Race/ethnicity: Caucasian (75 %); African American (8 %); Hispanic (13 %); Other (4 %) Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	<i>Tiny home</i> (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Herzog (2019) (Herzog, 2019)	Qualitative (general)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 3	Age: Mixed age groups (18+ years old) Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Hitzke (2021) (Hitzke, 2021)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (United States focus)
Human Rights Watch (2024) (Watch, 2024)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 148	Age: Mixed age groups (18-74) composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: half appeared to be black, and most people were of colour Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: 40 had physical and/or Physical disabilities.	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Hunte (2024) (Hunte, 2024)	Thesis proposal	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Huntington (2016) (Huntington, 2016)	Qualitative (general)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 10	Age: Adults ($m = 44.8$; range 35–56) Family composition: Single Race/ethnicity: Caucasian ($n = 10$, 100 %) Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Jackson, Callea, Stampar, Sanders, De Los Rios & Pierce (2020) (Jackson et al., 2020)	Qualitative (case study)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 12	Age: Mixed age groups Family composition: Mixed Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
James & Shahab (2024) (James and Shahab, 2024)	Qualitative (general)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 16	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not Specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United Kingdom
Jervis (2024) (Jervis, 2024)	Qualitative (general)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 3 (outreach workers) n = 7 (unhoused participants)	Age: 30–80 Family composition: Not Specified Race/ethnicity: Unhoused participants: Unhoused participants: white (n=4), Indigenous Canadian (n=1), Black (n=1), and Indian (n=1) Outreach workers: not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Unhoused participants: mental and physical health, problems, and addictions. Outreach workers: not specified. n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	Canada
Johnson (2019) (Johnson, 2019)	Qualitative (case study)	Peer reviewed	Urban	n/a		Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Johnston (2022) (Johnston, 2022)	Mixed methods (concurrent)	Not Peer reviewed	Urban	n = 36	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	Canada
Leavitt (2019) (Leavitt, 2019)	Qualitative (ethnography)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 19	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States

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Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Leickly, Townley, Ferry & Petteni (2024) (Leickly et al., 2022)	Mixed methods (case study)	Peer reviewed	Urban	n = 9	Age: Not specified Family composition: Single Race/ethnicity: White (n = 4); Black (n = 3); Latina (n = 1); Multiracial (n = 1) Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Leickly, Greene & Ferry (2024) (Leickly et al., 2024)	Qualitative (general)	Peer reviewed	Urban	n = 11	Age: m = 48 Family composition: Parents (n = 3) Race/ethnicity: White (n = 6), Black (n = 3), Somali (n = 1), Unknown (n = 1) Sexual orientation: LGBTQIA+ Clinical characteristics: mental health disability (n = 6), Physical disability (n = 7), unknown (n = 1)	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Lindeback (2024) (Lindeback, 2024)	Mixed methods (ethnography)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 19 case study n = 8 survey responses	Age: 21–72 Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Longworth (2019) (Longworth, 2019)	Qualitative (phenomenology)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 5	Age: Adults over 50 years old Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: White (n = 5, 100 %) Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Loukaitou-Sideris, Wasserman, Ding, et al. (2023) (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023)	Mixed methods (concurrent)	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	Department of Transportation staff: n = 13; Service providers: n = 8	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Luoni (2019) (Luoni, 2019)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	No participants (United States focus)
Lynch, McCoy & Gabrielian (2023) (Lynch et al., 2023)	Qualitative (case study)	Peer reviewed	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Malott (2021) (Malott 2021)	Proposal	Not peer reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Not specified	No participants (United States focus)
Margier (2021) (Margier, 2021)	Qualitative (Ethnography)	Peer reviewed	Urban	n = 20	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified	Not specified	No participants (United States focus)

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Margier (2023) (Margier, 2023)	Qualitative (Ethnography)	Peer reviewed	Urban	n = 30	Clinical characteristics: Not specified Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Marshall, McKinley, Costantini, Murphy, Lysaght & Hart (2022) (Marshall et al., 2022)	Mixed methods (case study)	Peer reviewed	Rural	n = 13	Age: 17–65 Family composition: single (n = 7), common law (n = 3) divorced (n = 2) and separated (n = 1) Race/ethnicity: Indigenous (n = 1) and non-indigenous (n = 12) Sexual orientation: Heterosexual (n = 13) Clinical characteristics: Physical/cognitive health: musculoskeletal condition (n = 8), Cognitive/neurological (n = 3), Cardiac (n = 3), Respiratory (n = 2), Oral/dental (n = 1), Diabetes (n = 1), Declined (n = 1), Mental health: Mood disorder (n = 7), anxiety disorder (n = 6), Personality disorder (n = 2)	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	Canada
Martinez (2018) (S. Martinez, 2018)	Qualitative (general)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	“roughly fifty unstructured interviews” p11	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Not specified	United States
McGuffin (2021) (McGuffin, 2021)	Book Chapter	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Mendelson (2021) (Mendelson, 2021)	Thesis proposal	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Millard-Ball (2021) (Viewpoint, 2021)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (United States focus)
Mingoya (2015) (Mingoya, 2015)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 10 (Occupy Madison founders, board members, residents and neighbours) n = 11 (Dignity Village residents, caseworkers, religious institution representatives and multiple officials)	Age: Not specified Family composition: Mixed compositions Race/ethnicity: “only 1 % of dignity villagers are African American.” p53, Not specified for Occupy Madison participants Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Mogk, Shmigol, Futrell, Stover & Hagopian (2020) (Mogk et al., 2020)	Quantitative (cross-sectional)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 101	Age: Adults (m = 43.3; range 22–67) Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Asian (n = 1, 1 %), Multiracial (n = 5, 5.2 %); Latino (n = 6, 6.3 %);	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (n.d.) (National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	Black/African American (n = 8, 8.3 %); American Indian/American Native (n = 11, 11.5 %); White (n = 72, 75 %) Sexual orientation: Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (n = 10, 12 %); Heterosexual (n = 88, 88 %) Clinical characteristics: One or more chronic illnesses (n = 46, 45.5 %); One or more mental health issues (n = 78, 77.2 %); Physical disability (n = 45, 44.6 %); Experienced trauma (n = 55, 54.6 %); Unhealthy relationship with alcohol or drugs (n = 25, 24.8 %)	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (United States focus)
Noguchi (2023) (Noguchi, 2023)	Qualitative (general)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 121	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
O Strategies & CTLabs (2024) (Strategies O. 2024)	Organizational Report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Not specified	No participants (Canada focus)
Orr, Németh, Rigolón, Santos Granja & Slabaugh (2024) (Orr et al., 2023)	Qualitative (general)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 7	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United Staes
Pable (2023) (Pable, 2023)	Book Chapter	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (United States focus)
Pamuk & Umarov (2022) (Pamuk and Umarov, 2022)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	No participants (United States focus)
Phillips & Hamilton (1996) (Phillips and Hamilton, 1996)	Book Chapter	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without integrated amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	No participants (United States focus)
Pickerill, Baker & Wang (2023) (Pickerill et al., 2023)	Book Chapter	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (Canada, United States, and England focus)
Pope (2018) (Pope, 2018)	Qualitative (case study)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Przybylinski (2023) (Przybylinski, 2023)	Qualitative (ethnography)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 44 (n = 28 residents; n = 4	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not	Tiny home (i.e. small home	United Staes

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Reidy (2023) (Reidy, 2023)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Not Peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	local government staff; n = 12 homeowner neighbors) specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified n/a	with integrated amenities) Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	No participants (United States focus)
Raising the Roof (2016) (Raise the Roof 2016)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Mixed urban/rural	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (Canadian focus)
Robertson & Schweitzer (2021) (Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021)	Practice guide	Not peer-reviewed	Mixed urban/ rural	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (International focus)
Rumboldt (2022) (Rumboldt, 2022)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Not peer-reviewed	Mixed urban/rural	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (Canadian focus)
Scally, Gold, Oliver & Salerno (2020) (Scally et al., 2020)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 19	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Schuler (2023) (Schuler, 2023)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: LGBTQIA+ Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Scoccimaro (2021) (Scoccimaro, 2021)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Rural	Not specified	Age: Mixed age groups Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Seeley (2020) (Seeley, 2020)	Mixed methods (sequential explanatory)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n/a	Age: Mixed age groups Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	International
Shearer & Burton (2023) (Shearer and Burton, 2023)	Mixed methods (sequential explanatory)	Peer-reviewed	Mixed urban/ rural	Survey 1: n = 56; Survey 2: n = 369; Survey 3: n = 640; Individual interviews: n = 12	Age: Mixed age groups (most 40+) for surveys, Family composition: Interviews: Younger couples, three had children Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics:	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	Australia

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Siahaan (2023) (Siahaan, 2023)	Qualitative (general)	Not-peer reviewed	Urban	n/a	mentions physical health problems and mental health n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States Focus)
Silver (2023) (Silver, 2023)	Book chapter	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No Participants (Europe and United States)
Stevens & Dhungel (2024) (Stevens and Dhungel, 2024)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	No participants (Canada)
Tanner (1965) (Tanner, 1965)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	Canada
Trambley (2021) (Trambley, 2021)	Narrative review/opinion paper	Peer-reviewed	Mixed urban/ rural	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (United States focus)
Trauth (2021) (Trauth, 2021)	Qualitative (case study)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Urban (2016) (Urban, 2016)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	Not specified	Age: Mixed age groups Family composition: Mixed compositions Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Viso(2022) (Viso, 2022)	Qualitative (ethnography)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n = 11 persons with lived experience; n = 1 staff member	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	United States
Waters (2022) (Waters, 2022)	Qualitative (case study)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n/a	n/a	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	No participants (United States focus)
Wasserman, Loukaitou-Sideris, Ding & Nelischer (2023) (Wasserman et al., 2023)	Qualitative (general)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 21	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States
Wilson (2021) (Wilson, 2021)	Mixed methods (sequential explanatory)	Dissertation/thesis	Not specified	n = 32	Age: Not specified Family composition: Mixed family composition Race/ethnicity: Asian or Pacific Islander (n = 2, 6.3 %); Black or African American, not Latino (n =	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	United States

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Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Study Design	Peer Review Status	Community Type	Sample Size	Participant characteristics	Tiny Home/Sleeping Cabin Type	Country of Participants
Wilson, Mahadevan, Villodas, Rodriguez, Bailliard & Cuddeback (2022) (Wilson et al., 2022)	Qualitative (general)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	n = 28	5;15.6 %) Latino or Hispanic (n = 5, 15.6 %); Native American or American Indian (n = 3, 9.4 %); White (n = 29, 90.6 %) Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified Age: Adults (m = 49; sd = 10.6) Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Individuals with serious mental illness (100 %)	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	United States
Win (2023) (Win, 2023)	Quantitative (Experimental)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n/a	n/a	Sleeping cabin (i.e. a cabin without amenities such as running water, cooking facilities)	No human participants (United States focus)
Winkler, Peterson & Hall (2022) (Winkler et al., 2022)	Organizational report	Not peer-reviewed	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Wood (2023) (Wood, 2023)	Qualitative (arts-based research)	Dissertation/thesis	Urban	n/a	n/a	Tiny home (i.e. small home with integrated amenities)	No participants (United States focus)
Wong, Chen, Dicipulo, Weiss, Sleet & Francescutti (2020) (Wong et al., 2020)	Qualitative (case study)	Peer-reviewed	Urban	Not specified	Age: Not specified Family composition: Not specified Race/ethnicity: Not specified Sexual orientation: Not specified Clinical characteristics: Not specified	Mixed types (e.g. sleeping cabins, tiny homes)	Canada, United States, Scotland

Theme 2: how to make it happen

In a total of $n = 91$ (78.4 %) articles, authors provided guidance on strategies for implementing TH and/or SC communities (Alexander, 2017; Alexander, 2019; Alexander, 2022; Antczak, 2023; Arredondo, 2023; Australian Centre for Social Innovation 2019; Awad, 2022; Bevridge, 2023; Bezgrelbina et al., 2023; Bordelon and O'Hagan, 2019; Bowers, 2024; Bozorg and Miller, 2014; Calhoun et al., 2022; Casselman, 2024; Chaland, 2021; Cumberbatch-Pearson 2020; Stortz, 2022; Day, 2019; Day, 2019; Deniro, 2023; Donnelly, 2018; Douglas, 2023; Earl, 2023; Escalante and Wong, 2020; Evans, 2020; Evans, 2022; Evans, 2023; Evans, 2024; Esch, 2023; Falstad and Cloutier, 2020; Five-coat-Campbell, 2016; Furst, 2017; García, 2024; Giamarino, 2023; Gilmour, 2023; Gochnour 2023; Gold et al., 2021; Food and Shelter, 2019; Gulliver-Garcia, 2016; Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters 2022; Henderson, 2019; Herzog, 2019; Hitzke, 2021; Watch, 2024; Hunte, 2024; Huntington, 2016; Jackson et al., 2020; James and Shahab, 2024; Johnson, 2019; Johnston, 2022; Leavitt, 2019; Leckly et al., 2022; Leckly et al., 2024; Lindeback, 2024; Longworth, 2019; Luoni, 2019; Lynch et al., 2023; Malott 2021; Margier, 2021; Margier, 2023; Marshall et al., 2022; McGuffin, 2021; Viewpoint, 2021; Mingoya, 2015; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.; Noguchi, 2023; Strategies O. 2024; Pable, 2023; Phillips and Hamilton, 1996; Pickerill et al., 2023; Pope,

2018; Przybylinski, 2023; Reidy, 2023; Raise the Roof 2016; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021; Scally et al., 2020; Schuler, 2023; Scoccimaro, 2021; Shearer and Burton, 2023; Siahaan, 2023; Silver, 2023; Stevens and Dhungel, 2024; Trauth, 2021; Urban, 2016; Waters, 2022; Wilson, 2021; Wilson et al., 2022; Win, 2023; Wood, 2023; Wong et al., 2020; Clowdus, 2023). Authors discussed how THSC communities have been largely developed out of 'grassroots' approaches, where individual citizens and citizen groups have developed 'something out of nothing' (Antczak, 2023; Casselman, 2024; Gilmour, 2023; Reidy, 2023). As such, they described the need to be resourceful in building such communities by developing knowledge of local bylaws surrounding the size and location of THSCs to ensure the overall success of such projects, and sometimes challenging or superseding such bylaws in the process of implementation (Przybylinski, 2023). Available land on which to build THSCs was discussed as a common barrier to establishing such projects. In some communities, municipal land was available, and building relationships with municipalities was seen as critical to ensuring successful implementation (Awad, 2022). In other communities, municipally owned land was unavailable and authors advocated for building relationships with churches that often have access to unused land on which THSCs could be built (Reidy, 2023).

Negative public attitudes regarding THSCs was seen as a particular

challenge, and planning to mitigate these challenges early in the process was advised (Casselman, 2024; Strategies O. 2024; Clowdus, 2023). Developing relationships with local policymakers, citizens in the broad community, and establishing a site for their project by connecting with a network of local social services to collaborate on the delivery of supports for residents were all necessary tasks that were seen to take time and energy but were considered essential to the success of such projects (Bowers, 2024; Evans, 2023). A key challenge was ensuring the support of municipal policymakers for THSC projects as municipalities could present significant barriers to the implementation of such projects whether or not they were situated on municipally owned land (Awad, 2022; James and Shahab, 2024). Providing education to local policymakers was seen as essential for both relationship-building and ensuring that they had the necessary knowledge to make decisions about such projects (James and Shahab, 2024).

Sub-Theme: problems arising during implementation

Problems arising during the implementation of THSC communities was explored in $n = 36$ (31.0 %) articles (Alexander, 2019; Antczak, 2023; Awad, 2022; Casselman, 2024; Stortz, 2022; Day, 2019; Evans, 2022; Furst, 2017; Giamarino, 2023; Gold et al., 2021; Food and Shelter, 2019; Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters 2022; Henderson, 2019; Herzog, 2019; Watch, 2024; Jackson et al., 2020; Jervis, 2024; Leickly et al., 2022; Leickly et al., 2024; Lindeback, 2024; Margier, 2023; Marshall et al., 2022; Mingoya, 2015; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.; Noguchi, 2023; Pable, 2023; Pickerill et al., 2023; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021; Scally et al., 2020; Scoccimaro, 2021; Urban, 2016; Viso, 2022; Wilson, 2021; Wilson et al., 2022; Martinez, 2018; Clowdus, 2023). Problematic power dynamics was a notable issue that was identified as a common challenge during the implementation of THSC projects (Awad, 2022; Casselman, 2024; Watch, 2024). In one community that decided on a self-governing system, residents reported that dynamics where a dominant group controlled the majority of decisions in the community began to develop, while a less dominant group felt powerless to enact agency over how the community was operated, a situation that was described as “traumatic” (Herzog, 2019). In other communities, rules established by staff, combined with constant wellness and cleanliness checks of their units felt intrusive, reduced privacy, and gave residents the impression that they did not have ownership over the conditions in their THSC (Leickly et al., 2024). Some programs enforced rigid rules that were enforced by staff, including attending mandatory monthly meetings and work parties, and leaving the premises between the hours of 10–4 from Monday to Friday, thereby closely resembling the conditions in emergency shelter environments (Pickerill et al., 2023; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021). Finally, some authors were critical of communities with high standards for entry and ongoing eligibility, resulting in a high-barrier program that was seen to exclude the majority of individuals who were unhoused (Awad, 2022; Furst, 2017).

Theme 3: critical perspectives on the use of THSCs as a response to homelessness

Authors of $n = 79$ (68.1 %) articles offered critical perspectives on the use of THSCs as a response to homelessness (Alexander, 2022; Antczak, 2023; Arredondo, 2023; Awad, 2022; Beveridge, 2023; Bezbegelna et al., 2023; Bohn, 2023; Bordelon and O'Hagan, 2019; Bowers, 2024; Brisson et al., 2024; Brokenshire, 2019; Brokenshire, 2018; Casselman, 2024; Cumberbatch-Pearson 2020; Stortz, 2022; Day, 2019; Day, 2019; Deniro, 2023; Douglas, 2023; Earl, 2023; Evans, 2020; Evans, 2022; Evans, 2023; Evans, 2024; Esch, 2023; Falstad and Cloutier, 2020; Fivecoat-Campbell, 2016; Furst, 2017; García, 2024; Giamarino, 2023; Gilmour, 2023; Gochnour 2023; Gold et al., 2021; Food and Shelter, 2019; Herzog, 2019; Hitzke, 2021; Watch, 2024; Hunte, 2024; Huntington, 2016; Jackson et al., 2020; James and Shahab, 2024; Jervis, 2024; Johnson, 2019; Johnston, 2022; Leickly et al., 2022; Leickly et al., 2024; Lindeback, 2024; Longworth, 2019; Lynch

et al., 2023; Margier, 2021; Margier, 2023; Marshall et al., 2022; McGuffin, 2021; Mingoya, 2015; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.; Noguchi, 2023; Strategies O. 2024; Orr et al., 2023; Pable, 2023; Phillips and Hamilton, 1996; Pickerill et al., 2023; Przybylinski, 2023; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021; Rumboldt, 2022; Scally et al., 2020; Schuler, 2023; Scoccimaro, 2021; Shearer and Burton, 2023; Siahaan, 2023; Stevens and Dhungel, 2024; Tanner, 1965; Waters, 2022; Wasserman et al., 2023; Wilson, 2021; Wilson et al., 2022; Win, 2023; Wong et al., 2020; Martinez, 2018; Clowdus, 2023). Overall, authors emphasized that there appears to be a lack of consensus around whether THSCs should be used as strategy to respond to homelessness (Arredondo, 2023; Casselman, 2024; Cumberbatch-Pearson 2020; Stortz, 2022; Earl, 2023; Lindeback, 2024; Pickerill et al., 2023). A primary concern was the profound lack of empirical evidence on which to support the use of tiny homes and sleeping cabin communities as a response to homelessness (Douglas, 2023; Huntington, 2016; Scally et al., 2020; Evans, 2021). These authors indicated the need to replicate and evaluate THSC communities in a range of locations to determine their effectiveness on health or social outcomes, which would have implications for their ongoing use or cessation (Longworth, 2019). Authors emphasized that such research or program evaluations conducted need to represent the full breadth of data collected to garner a full understanding of the *benefits* and *limitations* of THSCs, particularly when public dollars are invested in such projects (Bordelon and O'Hagan, 2019; Gold et al., 2021). Herzog warned that strong interest in establishing THSC communities by citizens and citizen groups may lead some to undermine data that could be seen as less favourable by funders, and citizens in the broad community in an effort to advance their overall objectives (Herzog, 2019). For example, the authors of one report emphasized primarily positive outcomes associated with the success of residents in securing tenancies following homelessness in one program, while de-emphasizing criticisms of the program by residents regarding the implementation of certain rules and a lack of community feeling overall (Herzog, 2019).

Several authors expressed ethical concerns about the use of THSCs and their various configurations (Beveridge, 2023; Deniro, 2023; Evans, 2023; Esch, 2023; Przybylinski, 2023). Esch highlighted that THSCs are frequently lauded as a viable alternative for individuals preferring a more mobile lifestyle, when in reality, the reason they are promoted to provide housing to people who experience homelessness is because they face economic exclusion from the housing market (Esch, 2023). This author expressed concerns that what is being touted as a reasonable solution for people who wish to be mobile represents a euphemism for the precarity that characterizes the lives of unhoused persons (Esch, 2023). Other authors expressed concern for the lack of amenities that frequently characterize sleeping cabin communities specifically, with one community leader in an included article indicating that:

Some tiny home communities build community really well, some are just glad to get a roof over their head, even if it is more like a storage shed, maybe power, no water, and no bathroom. At the end of the day, that might be a roof over somebody's head, but it's still, it's one step up from a cardboard box. So it's not a home, no one wants to live without running water or bathrooms for the rest of their life. [63] [Schleuter in Evans, p. 556, 2022]

Finally, although THSCs are often represented as a novel concept, some authors highlighted that such approaches are not at all novel, and have been used several times throughout history to meet the needs of citizens in the context of economic and political hardship (Mingoya, 2015; Tanner, 1965; Urban, 2016). Mingoya described how “tramp houses” were built along railroad lines in the late 1800's to provide temporary shelter to unhoused individuals who were riding trains and frequently stopping in nearby towns along the way (Mingoya, 2015). This approach was seen to discourage unhoused individuals from harassing local citizens when they stopped on their travels (Mingoya, 2015). In the 1930's, the Government of Canada utilized sleeping cabins for single men who were unemployed during the Great Depression in the form of “relief camps” (Tanner, 1965). Further, THSCs were used to

house economically distressed people who were displaced after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, some of which were built onto in subsequent years and continue to exist in the present day (Urban, 2016).

Sub-Theme: inconsistency regarding what THSCs are or should be

In $n = 61$ (52.6 %) articles, authors expressed concerns about inconsistency in definitions of THSCs, and called for more consistent terminology and ways of classifying these shelter types (Antczak, 2023; Arredondo, 2023; Awad, 2022; Beveridge, 2023; Bordelon and O'Hagan, 2019; Bowers, 2024; Brisson et al., 2024; Calhoun et al., 2022; Casselman, 2024; Cumberbatch-Pearson 2020; Stortz, 2022; Day, 2019; Deniro, 2023; Douglas, 2023; Earl, 2023; Escalante and Wong, 2020; Evans, 2020; Evans, 2022; Evans, 2024; Esch, 2023; Furst, 2017; Gilmour, 2023; Gold et al., 2021; Food and Shelter, 2019; Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters 2022; Henderson, 2019; Herzog, 2019; Hitzke, 2021; Watch, 2024; Jackson et al., 2020; James and Shahab, 2024; Jervis, 2024; Johnson, 2019; Johnston, 2022; Leickly et al., 2022; Leickly et al., 2024; Lindeback, 2024; Longworth, 2019; Luoni, 2019; McGuffin, 2021; Mingoya, 2015; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.; Noguchi, 2023; Orr et al., 2023; Pable, 2023; Pamuk and Umarov, 2022; Phillips and Hamilton, 1996; Pickerill et al., 2023; Pope, 2018; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021; Scally et al., 2020; Schuler, 2023; Scoccimaro, 2021; Shearer and Burton, 2023; Siahaan, 2023; Silver, 2023; Wasserman et al., 2023; Wilson, 2021; Win, 2023; Wood, 2023; Clowdus, 2023). Authors emphasized that definitions related to THSCs, their various configurations, and the amenities included vary widely across communities, organizations and literature on the topic, leading to this confusion. Further, the range of terms used to describe THSC were frequently conflated with one another, causing confusion about what THSCs are or should be (Casselman, 2024; Watch, 2024). In some communities, THs and/or SCs were the sole shelter types, whereas in others, THs and/or SCs were interspersed among tents in a sanctioned encampment thereby mixing people in a range of precarious living situations (Day, 2019). In other communities, shelters were built on wheels or otherwise portable and meant to be moved from place to place (Longworth, 2019).

Some authors expressed concerns that there appears to be little consensus on what role THSCs should have in supporting individuals who experience homelessness (Furst, 2017; Jackson et al., 2020). Authors identified that although THSC communities are growing across the United States, that they fall into a housing market "grey area" where it is unclear if they are meant to be affordable, transitional or permanent housing, concluding that offering such dwellings as affordable housing would be inadequate for meeting the needs of unhoused persons in the long term (Jackson et al., 2020). Furst et al. concurred, identifying that the scope of a municipality's homelessness problem often determined how THSC communities would be used, with some communities needing such housing options as a temporary solution and others as permanent housing (Furst, 2017). These authors highlight that clarity is needed around whether THSCs should be permanent housing, meant to facilitate home ownership, or be a temporary solution until a person finds housing in order to inform how such communities are configured and managed (Furst, 2017).

Regarding size and amenities, what is available in THSC communities differed considerably across articles. In some communities, building codes required that THSCs not exceed 200sq/ft (~61sq/m), or they would fall into a category where they would be subjected to building code requirements, resulting in delays and higher expenses (Luoni, 2019). For this reason, organizations were driven to construct THSCs that did not exceed this size to avoid the need to meet these requirements (Leickly et al., 2022). In many SC communities, amenities were not integrated within a self-contained unit. Instead, a central hub where food was prepared and running water was provided was made available to residents outside of their units (Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021). This created a problem for residents who wished for more privacy and autonomy, and they worried about the stigma of living in a place

where they needed to access a central hub outside of their unit to meet their basic needs (Evans, 2022; Longworth, 2019; Mingoya, 2015). On the other end of this continuum, tiny homes constructed with all included amenities, such as running water and kitchen facilities, followed typical processes for building larger homes safely and efficiently thereby increasing the comfort of residents (National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.). Of THSCs, the greatest criticisms were of sleeping cabins with fewer amenities, with some authors describing the use of "pallet shelters," which were built from pallet wood in such a way that community members observed that they appeared to resemble small prison cells, rather than a comfortable temporary or permanent shelter (Douglas, 2023). In one project, the propane heating paid for by residents at a cost of \$50 (USD)/month caused condensation on the interior of sleeping cabins, leading to the development of mildew which soon became a problem in the community (Mingoya, 2015).

Regarding length of stay, authors of an environmental scan of THSCs reported a range of practices where some communities imposed limits on the length of residency, whereas others were considered to be permanent (Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021). Others resulted in ownership of the tiny home or sleeping cabin after a prescribed period of time (Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021). In some communities, residents were expected to pay rent and insurance to live in their TH or SC, regardless of the amenities available, while residents in other communities were not (Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021).

Theme 4: it's better than nothing

Authors of $n = 48$ (41.4 %) articles described how THSCs are the only option in the context of an overburdened system lacking shelter and deeply affordable housing for individuals living in low-income (Alexander, 2019; Antczak, 2023; Awad, 2022; Bezgrehelna et al., 2023; Bordelon and O'Hagan, 2019; Bowers, 2024; Brallier and Southworth, 2024; Brisson et al., 2024; Calhoun et al., 2022; Casselman, 2024; Cumberbatch-Pearson 2020; Stortz, 2022; Day, 2019; Deniro, 2023; Douglas, 2023; Escalante and Wong, 2020; Furst, 2017; García, 2024; Giamarino, 2023; Gochnour 2023; Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters 2022; Watch, 2024; Hunte, 2024; Huntington, 2016; Jackson et al., 2020; Jervis, 2024; Johnston, 2022; Leickly et al., 2022; Leickly et al., 2024; Longworth, 2019; Mingoya, 2015; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.; Orr et al., 2023; Pable, 2023; Phillips and Hamilton, 1996; Przybylinski, 2023; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021; Rumboldt, 2022; Schuler, 2023; Scoccimaro, 2021; Siahaan, 2023; Silver, 2023; Trambley, 2021; Urban, 2016; Wilson, 2021; Wilson et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2020; Clowdus, 2023). These authors indicated that persons experiencing homelessness express gratitude for the opportunity to sleep in a sheltered location and that THSCs represent an improvement from sleeping outdoors or in an encampment (Alexander, 2019; Huntington, 2016; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.). The conditions available in THSC communities were reported to be preferable to shelters and encampments as they exceeded what was available in such settings by providing shelter and greater autonomy (Antczak, 2023; Bezgrehelna et al., 2023; Pable, 2023). Compared with shelters, Scoccimaro makes the point that THSCs offer more privacy and safety, and are thus, preferable in terms of what is available to individuals who lack access to permanent housing (Scoccimaro, 2021). Overall, the authors emphasized that in the context of a situation where there is a dire lack of deeply affordable housing, that THSCs play an important role in meeting the shelter needs of individuals who experience homelessness and will continue to do so until the housing crisis is resolved (Alexander, 2019).

Discussion

We conducted this scoping review to synthesize a rapidly growing body of literature pertaining to the use of THSCs as a response to homelessness. We identified 116 articles that were primarily representing a North American context, published primarily in the last two decades, that are largely non-empirical and not peer reviewed. This state

of the literature is reflective of the grassroots way that THSCs have emerged as a response to homelessness, and the slow uptake by researchers surrounding such approaches. Although perceptions were mixed, many authors of included articles highlighted a range of benefits of THSCs, specifically the value of such approaches for providing an alternative to emergency shelters and encampments in a way that preserves privacy, safety and dignity (Antczak, 2023; Bezgrebelska et al., 2023; Pable, 2023; Pickerill et al., 2023; Robertson and Schweitzer, 2021). There was a lack of clarity around the role of THSC communities in responding to homelessness in that some organizations promoted the use of such shelters as temporary, and others as a permanent solution (Furst, 2017; Jackson et al., 2020). The use of SCs over THs was specifically criticized for failing to provide adequate amenities for residents in a self-contained unit, and for replicating some conditions that are characteristic of emergency shelter contexts (Awad, 2022; Casselman, 2024; Watch, 2024). Finally, several authors highlighted the need for more research to enhance clarity around the role of THSCs among the array of responses to homelessness and to generate data on the effectiveness of such approaches on health and social outcomes (Douglas, 2023; Huntington, 2016; Scally et al., 2020; Evans, 2021).

Overall, the scope of the literature on THSCs is largely editorial, comprised of various proponents and opponents arguing for and against the continued development of these housing and shelter approaches. This body of literature, however, provides no evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of THSCs as a response to homelessness, nor preferences of people experiencing homelessness in contrast with emergency shelters, encampments or transitional or permanent housing. None of the included studies evaluated the effectiveness of THSCs either over time or in relation to other approaches on health, social, or housing outcomes. The topic of gender or other social locations in relation to THSCs was markedly absent from this body of literature. More research, particularly studies that compare THs and SCs with outcomes in emergency shelter, transitional, and permanent supportive housing programs is needed. Organizations that operate existing TH and/or SC communities are encouraged to evaluate their approaches over time, and to collaborate with researchers to evaluate these outcomes. Policymakers should be aware of the state of this evidence and require that outcomes are systematically measured during the implementation of pilot projects that they decide to fund in their communities. This will help to further the development of a body of evidence to help to determine whether allocating ongoing public funding to THSC programs is warranted over other approaches.

This literature raises several concerns about the rapid implementation of THSC communities in high-income countries, particularly in light of the lack of peer-reviewed, empirical evidence on the topic as highlighted by the findings of this review. THSCs are often advocated for as an alternative to emergency shelters, yet the very reasons for promoting THSCs over shelters are problems that appear to have been replicated in THSC communities as highlighted in the articles included in this review (Awad, 2022; Casselman, 2024; Watch, 2024). For example, THSCs have been critiqued for the use of a central hub and rules imposed on residents that reduced residents' sense of privacy and increased feelings of being unnecessarily surveilled (Leickly et al., 2024), a problem known to be characteristic of emergency shelter environments (Taylor and Walsh, 2018; Tsai et al., 2024). Further, claims about how THSC communities can provide a foundation for learning skills that can help to improve the lives of persons who experience homelessness (Falstad and Cloutier, 2020; Food and Shelter, 2019; Huntington, 2016) begs the question of why the same skills cannot be developed in traditional emergency shelters, transitional housing or permanent supportive housing programs. In fact, such programming is characteristic of such environments, particularly in transitional and permanent supportive housing (Tiderington and Goodwin, 2021; Sisselman-Borgia, 2021; Marshall et al., 2021). Although it is clear that emergency shelter environments present particular difficulties in the lives of persons who experience homelessness, including a lack of privacy and a heightened risk of

victimization (Kerman et al., 2025; Kerman et al., 2024), we question whether these problems cannot be overcome with changes in organizational policy and re-configuration of the built environment. Such policy changes could, for example, be developed in collaboration with persons who experience homelessness to ensure that such environments are suitable for meeting one's short-term needs until housing becomes available.

In reviewing this body of literature, there appears to be a clear division in perspectives towards THs versus SCs, with the latter being criticized on ethical grounds. Although literature highlighted that some THs, with full amenities, are built according to local building codes (National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.), SCs are frequently built in such a way as to avoid needing to meet building code regulations to permit faster, less expensive builds (Luoni, 2019). It should be noted that building codes are present to protect people from occupying environments that "...adequately protect public health, safety, and welfare" (International Code Council 2021). Creating shelter spaces for a population of people who face deep degrees of oppression in our society that do not meet building codes would seemingly reinforce the notion that this population is not worthy of the same basic safety and public health rights as others in the general population. Although the authors of included studies rightfully indicate that SCs represent an improvement over living unsheltered on the street or in an encampment (Alexander, 2019; Huntington, 2016; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans n.d.), the conditions in SCs represent only a marginal improvement over living in such environments, and more could be demanded from policymakers than a marginal improvement. Given the conditions of SCs described in this review, we found it morally questionable that residents in such communities paid rent and insurance fees to live in what would otherwise be considered a sub-standard, illegal, rental unit in the mainstream housing market.

The emergence of THSC communities has occurred in response to the dire lack of emergency shelter beds, and transitional and permanent housing available in many communities, with the belief that THSCs can be built quickly and at a lesser cost. Recent research, however, compared the cost of initiating and operating three types of emergency shelter models: traditional congregate shelters; motel shelters; and "village-style shelters" (i.e. THSC communities) (Greene et al., 2025). In this study, the authors found that "village-style shelters" cost more in set-up costs than traditional and motel-style shelters, and cost significantly more in annual operating costs (Greene et al., 2025). In fact, congregate shelters were the least costly of all three options, costing less than half of "village-style shelters" in terms of set-up (\$43,692 vs. \$99,630), and annual operating costs (\$16,654 vs. \$29,681) (Greene et al., 2025). It is difficult to rationalize such funding in light of little tangible evidence supporting THSCs which indicates a clear advantage of such approaches over emergency and motel-style shelter options regarding cost, health and social outcomes. For this reason, we emphasize the need to conduct research highlighting the specific contributions that tiny homes and sleeping cabins make to the health and social well-being of persons experiencing homelessness over other available approaches. This review provides evidence that this research has not yet been conducted, and we hope that this paper will be viewed as a call to action for the research community to fill this critical gap in existing literature.

Finally, the authors of included articles highlighted that THSCs are not a novel approach. In fact, a range of formal and informal initiatives aimed at providing rapid shelter to people experiencing economic oppression including "tramp houses" and "relief camps" have been used for more than a century (Mingoya, 2015; Tanner, 1965; Urban, 2016). While we did not locate any literature meeting our inclusion criteria on the topic of "Hoovervilles" in this study, it is important to note the presence of informal encampments including THSCs emerging across the United States during the Great Depression (Gregory, 2009). Such encampments were termed "Hoovervilles" as a way of criticizing the U.S. President, Herbert Hoover, during this period, and his perceived lack of action towards preventing homelessness, causing individuals to live in

dire circumstances such as THSC communities (Gregory, 2009). While we are not currently in a Great Depression in most high income countries internationally, 71 % of countries worldwide have observed growth in income inequality within their own countries over the past 25 years and a deeply widening wealth gap during a time of unprecedented global wealth (United Nations 2025). This situation, combined with declining investments in deeply affordable public housing has excluded many from the housing market in high income countries (Suttor, 2016). The solution to this problem is not to become complacent by advocating for anything less than adequate housing, but rather to demand better policy that addresses the structural causes of homelessness in our communities – a lack of deeply affordable housing, increasing rates of poverty, and a widening wealth gap. Such approaches include a restoration of the public housing system that has been neglected in most high-income nations in the past three decades (Gaetz, 2010) by repairing and significantly expanding the number of available public housing units, coupled with implementation of a basic income guarantee for individuals living in low income (Kerman, 2021).

Limitations

Our review, like all research, should be interpreted by acknowledging its limitations. Although our search was exhaustive, in any scoping review, there is a risk that we may have missed articles for inclusion in our search. While preparing this article, we became aware of a key article meeting our inclusion criteria, which was published several months after we updated our search (Greene et al., 2025). To honour our commitment to the selected methodology, and to avoid a further update, which was not feasible with existing resources, we did not include this article in our findings but have instead cited it throughout our introduction and discussion sections to ensure its inclusion in our discussion of this topic. It should be noted that our findings represent primarily non-peer reviewed literature and theses and dissertations. Although we do not typically conduct quality assessments of studies in scoping reviews, the reader should be aware that non-peer reviewed studies and dissertations and theses have a lesser likelihood of quality than articles that have undergone a rigorous peer review process. Further, a lack of discussion on gender in the articles included in this review is notable and limits our ability to understand how THSCs may be experienced or used by a range of gendered groups. Finally, the reader should be aware that our findings are primarily derived from articles pertaining to the United States and Canada, and in urban contexts. Future research should explore the use of THSCs in other contexts to generate findings that are more representative of different geographic locations and community sizes.

Conclusion

THSCs have emerged as a response to a growing housing and homelessness problem in many communities, yet there is little empirical evidence to warrant their use. More research is needed to understand any unique contributions of THSCs in the array of strategies used to support persons experiencing homelessness. In the absence of this evidence, one is relegated to theoretical discussions about the value of such approaches in the current system. Research evaluating the effectiveness of THSCs on health and social outcomes, and compared with other approaches, such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing programs, is specifically needed. Researchers and advocates may also consider focusing their efforts on pressuring policymakers to ameliorate the structural problems that have led to homelessness in their communities, rather than investing additional resources into temporary approaches that prolong precarity for individuals who experience homelessness in their communities.

Ethics statement

Ethics approval was not required for this research.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Carrie Anne Marshall: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Julia Holmes:** Writing – review & editing, Project administration, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Corinna Easton:** Writing – review & editing, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Brooklyn Ward:** Writing – review & editing, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Shauna Perez:** Writing – review & editing, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Roxanne Isard:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Nick Kerman:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Cheryl Forchuk:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Rebecca Gewurtz:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest with respect to this research.

Supplementary materials

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